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Overcoming The Anxiety In Speaking English

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Abstrack

This research article discusses strategies for overcoming anxiety in speaking English as developed by Kondo and Ying-Ling (2004), those are; Preparation, Positive Thinking, Relaxation, Peer Seeking and Resignation. The study aims to address the anxiety frequently experienced by students as foreign language speakers when speaking English. This learning strategy model is expected to alleviate these issues so that students no longer feel anxiety when speaking English as a second language.

Keywords: *Overcoming, The Anxiety, Speaking English*

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INTRODUCTION

Speaking in English in a country where English is not fully implemented is not as easy as it seems. Students often feel anxious when they want to speak, answer questions, or even give a short speech. This anxiety is very common, but if it frequently occurs, students will miss many opportunities to practice their English. This also causes students who experience anxiety to lose many chances to receive feedback from listeners about their speaking.

In fact, many students still do not know which strategies are effective in overcoming their anxiety when speaking English. Therefore, to address this anxiety, we need to consider appropriate strategies to manage anxiety when speaking English. The strategies used must be effective, meaning they should be able to reduce anxiety while speaking in English. Thus, the author aims to answer the question based on the aforementioned issues: What strategies are effective in overcoming anxiety when speaking English?

METHOD

In this research a qualitative approach is used, because problems related to humans basically depend on observation. According to Moleong (2007; 6) that: Qualitative Research is research that intends to understand the phenomena experienced by research subjects such as behavior, perception, motivation, actions and so on holistically and through descriptions in the form of words and language.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

There are some types of strategy in overcoming anxiety when speaking English developed by Kondo and Ying-Ling (2004), those are; Preparation, Positive Thinking, Relaxation, Peer Seeking and Resignation. Of these five types, the researcher takes the discussion from a book titled "My Public Speaking" created by Hilbram Dunar.

1. Preparation

Effective preparation plays a crucial role in overcoming anxiety when speaking English. First and foremost, thoroughly understanding the topic you will discuss is essential. Conduct comprehensive research to gather relevant information and insights. Organize your thoughts logically, outlining key points and supporting details to maintain coherence and structure in your presentation or conversation. Practice speaking aloud to improve pronunciation, intonation, and overall fluency, which helps build confidence in delivering your message.

Additionally, expand your vocabulary related to the topic and learn essential phrases and expressions that can enhance clarity and precision in your communication. Anticipate potential questions or challenges your audience might pose and prepare thoughtful responses in advance.

Utilize visual aids or notes to support your presentation, ensuring they are clear, relevant, and helpful in reinforcing your points.

Furthermore, manage your time effectively during preparation to avoid feeling rushed or overwhelmed. Practice deep breathing and relaxation techniques to calm nerves before speaking. Seek opportunities to practice speaking English with friends, colleagues, or in front of a mirror to build comfort and confidence in expressing yourself. This also similiar to what was stated by (Nurahman et al. 2023) The preparations they did include reading the material, practicing speaking in front of a mirror, practicing speaking with friends, watching short films, and taking small notes.

Other things can do to alleviate nervousness are:

- a. Drink a glass of water to improve blood circulation.
- b. Do some light exercises beforehand to relax your muscles.
- c. Talk to a friend to ease the tension of waiting for your turn.
- d. Repeat the phrase “I am ready” several times to boost confidence.

2. Positive Thinking

According to Chatton (2016), positive thinking refers to an individual’s perspective on perceiving situations from a positive perspective and seeking positive aspects in every occurrence. Having an optimistic and positive outlook on life is crucial in learning the English language, as positive thinking impacts various aspects of language learning. It increases self-confidence, improves quick responses and effective communication, boosts motivation, facilitates rapid learning, and enhances flexibility and adaptability. Positive thinking is a key factor in effectively learning English because it helps enhance linguistic performance and enables more effective communication, motivating individuals to consistently improve their language skills. Adopting an optimistic and positive mindset is essential for learners to enhance their linguistic performance and improve their ability to communicate effectively. This is also similar to what was stated by (Shokrpour et al., 2021). Positive thinking can also improve students’ ability to manage stress. Positive thinking helps reduce student anxiety, and increases students’ ability to manage stress, so they are able to connect their thoughts, feelings and behavior.

3. Relaxation

Make yourself comfortable by flowing oxygen. When nervous, the brain works harder, requiring more oxygen. As a result, breathing becomes short and fast (panting) like someone who just finished exercising. With panting breath, there’s a risk of speaking quickly, which could lead to tongue twisting or mumbling, doubling your nervousness. What needs to be done is to deliver oxygen effectively to the brain by breathing comfortably. Breathing, breathe slowly, inhale through the nose, hold for five seconds, then exhale slowly until fully empty, and the abdomen flattens through the mouth. Do this five to ten times before speaking. Avoid breathing like you’ve just finished exercising (short and rapid breaths). Regulate your breathing so that your heart rate is normal and calm. Besides that, relaxation techniques can be done by stretching the muscles, meditating, and listening to music (Oxford, 1990 as cited in Toyama & Yamazaki, 2021). Once your body starts feeling comfortable, speak with a calm and clear voice to grab attention.

1) Voice

Speak with energy (not shouting). When feeling nervous, there’s often a lack of confidence, leading to speaking softly, making your voice unclear. Consequently, the more attention you receive when nervous, the more intensified the nervousness becomes. Speak slowly and clearly. This is done to avoid tongue slips or mispronunciations, which may exacerbate your nervousness.

2) Listen and pay attention

Often when nervous, you may want the appearance to end quickly, so consciously or unconsciously, you speak faster without paying attention to the audience. This situation will also be felt by the audience (who feels unnoticed), causing them to talk to themselves, be busy with their gadgets, or look at you with blank stares because their minds are elsewhere. There’s nothing wrong with pausing for a moment while speaking, asking one or two simple questions, or approaching the audience so they feel noticed and (automatically) pay attention to you.

Speak while occasionally making eye contact with the audience, so they feel noticed and a connection is established. If you feel uncomfortable looking into the audience’s eyes, you can gaze at their forehead, eyebrows, or nose. Avoid avoiding eye contact by solely focusing on the script, presentation material, or even the ceiling of the room.

4. Peer Seeking

This strategy is a consultation strategy carried out by fellow foreign language students. In overcoming anxiety when learning a foreign language, this strategy is often used by some students who experience anxiety while speaking, which in this strategy they try to compare themselves with their friends or others who also have the same problem with them. Besides, they can also form peer study groups. Peer-Seeking is one good strategy in reducing student anxiety when learning a foreign language. Try to find someone who you feel comfortable speaking with, perhaps somebody who is patient and kind and keen to speak English too. If you can practise speaking regularly, it should help to reduce anxious feelings. In addition, Kondo & Ying-Ling, (2004) also stated that seeing people who have the same anxiety as themselves can be a source of emotional regulation by social comparison for students who experience speech anxiety.

5. Resignation

According (Nurahman et al. 2023) Resignation is an action that does nothing, it means the student did not carry out the previous strategies. So students before starting public speaking, a common feeling experienced is nervousness or anxiety. Nervousness can affect anyone regardless of age, position, or social status. First, recognize the symptoms, then apply techniques to reduce them. Recognize the symptoms:

- a. Rapid heartbeat
- b. Shortness of breath
- c. Cold sweats
- d. Stomach ache
- e. Trembling
- f. Stuttering
- g. Losing words
- h. And many more, these can be felt one by one or all at once (so it feels quite distressing, doesn't it?).

If you experience one or more of these conditions before becoming a public speaker, it's almost certain that you're experiencing nervousness. The first thing to do is to accept the reality, don't deny it. Because the more you ignore nervousness, the worse it can get, or the mistakes you make can become more fatal. After sincerely accepting this condition, then you can take some steps to reduce it. Start by making yourself comfortable.

CONCLUSION

Having fluent English skills is everyone's dream, and speaking in public without feeling anxious is a goal for many. However, in reality, many still experience excessive anxiety when they want to speak, answer questions, or even give a short speech in English. This causes students to miss out on many opportunities to improve their English speaking skills and become more confident. Therefore, there is a need for solutions or strategies to eliminate the anxiety experienced by students. Based on the results of this research, the findings show that there are five types of strategies commonly used by students, namely: Preparation, Positive Thinking, Relaxation, Peer Seeking, and Resignation.

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